

Delaware Receives \$9M Federal Grant to Expand Mental Health Supports in Schools

Grant funds Project DeLAWARE, a new partnership between the State of Delaware and three school districts

WILMINGTON, Del. – Delaware has won a \$9 million federal grant to expand school mental health supports. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grant will fund Project DeLAWARE, a new partnership between the Delaware Department of Education, Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and their Families, and three school districts. The grant will fund \$1.8 million per year for five years.

“The trauma that children experience in their lives affects their health, learning and overall well-being. Too often those children also face barriers to accessing the supports they need,” said **Governor John Carney**. “This grant will be used to overcome some of those barriers by training treatment providers to deliver identified culturally-competent and evidence-based practices in children’s schools and homes.”

One school district in each county – Colonial School District in New Castle County, Capital School District in Kent County and Indian River School District in Sussex County – will participate. The districts’ enrollment totaled almost 27,000 in 2017-18, about a fifth of the state’s overall public school enrollment.

“Our children are confronted with new and unique challenges every day. It is critical that we provide them with the best

mental and behavioral health services available,” said **Lt. Governor Bethany Hall-Long, Chair of Delaware’s Behavioral Health Consortium**. “This grant will give our educators the tools they need to help students become stronger and healthier both in and out of the classroom.”

The grant will allow the Department of Education to build on its preexisting relationship with the Department of Services for Children, Youth and their Families’ Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services (PBH) to increase awareness of mental health and improve understanding and system response to mental health problems in schools across the state.

“We are extremely grateful that the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration has awarded Delaware this grant. The Department of Services for Children, Youth, and their Families has been on the forefront of recognizing the need for mental health and behavioral health supports in our schools,” said **Josette Manning, Secretary of the Department of Services for Children, Youth and their Families**. “This grant will assist our school-based family crisis therapists in the districts’ K-5 schools and will assist our behavioral health consultants in their middle schools by increasing access to supports and services in the school and community. This grant, coupled with another \$400,000 grant that we were just awarded from SAMHSA for outreach in the City of Wilmington for youth at risk for psychosis, will serve more children and youth who need our help in becoming healthy adults.”

Project DeLaWARE will include:

- Professional learning for all school staff personal on how the school’s multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) relate to mental health. MTSS will be used as a framework to promote and implement standardized, evidence-based procedures for screening and intervention.

- Hiring of additional in-school clinical staff and contracted support from outside providers.
- Provision of mental health services – including screening, assessment and treatment – in school and/or students' homes.
- Coordination of referral to services and follow up for students and their families for evidence-based school- and community-based mental health practices and services.
- Creation and implementation of a workforce development training plan to increase mental health awareness and literacy of school staff, administrators, families and students to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental illness and link to appropriate services.

“Project DeLaWARE will be used to develop and implement a comprehensive plan of school- and community-based mental health services,” said **Susan Bunting, Secretary of the Department of Education**. “By coordinating with other activities and services already provided in our schools, these additional supports and resources can make a real difference for our students, their families and communities.”

Each participating school district will engage its students, their families and community partners to develop behavioral health services in its schools.

“The students who come to school today are dealing with issues and trauma that we have not dealt with in the past,” said **Dan Shelton, Superintendent of the Capital School District**. “Having the opportunity to partner with DSCYF and PBH is an opportunity for us not only to build and strengthen relationships between the agencies that are working with our young people but to work in collaboration to develop the new best practices that are necessary to meet the needs of the whole child.”

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